United Nations S/2017/825

Security Council

Distr.: General
29 September 2017

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2348 (2017), in which the Council requested a report on the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.[1] It covers developments since the issuance of the latest report of 10 March 2017 (S/2017/208) and provides information on peace and security developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region up to 15 September 2017.

II. Major developments

A. Security situation

2. The security situation in the region was affected by the activities of armed groups in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika provinces and the crisis in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Persisting conflicts in the Central African Republic and in South Sudan, as well as the political situation in Burundi and tensions in the Pool region in the Republic of the Congo, created additional challenges to peace and security in the region.

3. As detailed in the latest reports on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), despite cooperation between and continuing military operations by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and MONUSCO, foreign and Congolese armed groups, notably the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces and several Mai-Mai groups, perpetrated violence and human rights abuses against civilians, attacked security

[1] In this context, the region includes the 13 signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In addition, the following four intergovernmental organizations act as witnesses/guarantors of the Framework: the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations.

Please recycle

agents and institutions and engaged in illegal economic activities, including illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources. New armed group alliances such as the Mouvement national pour la révolution in North Kivu and the Coalition nationale du peuple pour la souveraineté du Congo in South Kivu seemed to deliberately target the Congolese security forces and symbols of state authority.

4. The crisis in the Kasai region in western Democratic Republic of the Congo resulted in high levels of violence and human rights violations against civilians. It also threatened regional peace and security, following the influx of Congolese refugees into Angola, leading the Government of Angola to reinforce its security presence in the border areas.

5. There was a relative lull in fighting in the Kasai region during the reporting period, although there were periodic instances of serious violence, such as in Tshikapa (Kasai) and Luiza territory (Kasai Central), with women and children continuing to account for a significant portion of the victims. Ethnically based violence continued, with clashes between Kamuina Nsapu, some of whom have an allegiance to the Luba and Lulua communities, and the emerging Bana Mura militia, generally comprised of individuals from the Tshokwe, Pende and Tetela ethnic groups. Clashes took place in Kamonia and Luiza territories (Kasai Central). The Bana Mura, which has received some support from prominent political figures in Kasai, was allegedly armed and supported by State security forces and local chiefs.

6. In the context of the political crisis and the stalled transition, violence continued to spread into western Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Kongo Central and Kinshasa, strategic facilities and Congolese security forces were recently targeted by Bundu Dia Kongo (BDK) and Bundu Dia Mayala (BDM). Violence perpetrated by the latter in the Congolese capital and the neighbouring Kongo Central province on 7 August resulted in the death of 70 persons.

7. Security incidents also occurred along the border between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, as a result of the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army, which had increased again in the context of the withdrawal of United States Africa Command troops and the drawdown of the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army. Furthermore, the conflict in South Sudan exacerbated insecurity along the border of South Sudan with those two countries. At the time of finalizing the present report, 577 members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) remained on MONUSCO premises near Goma, and little progress was made towards their repatriation or resettlement in a third country during the reporting period.

8. In Uganda, intercommunal tensions in the Kasese district, near the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, continued to raise concern. Tensions also increased along the Ugandan border with South Sudan as a result of the continued influx of refugees fleeing conflict in South Sudan.

9. The implementation of the Nairobi Declarations, signed by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) in December 2013, recorded no progress during the reporting period. Consequently, the repatriation of former M23 elements from Uganda and Rwanda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained stalled. On 25 April, 44 former M23 members, intercepted by the Ugandan army at the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, were tried and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for illegal possession of firearms and illegal entry into Uganda. According to the Government of Uganda, over 900 former M23 elements previously cantoned in Bihanga military camp, Uganda, are presently unaccounted for, which raises

concern about their whereabouts. Among them is Sultani Makenga, a former M23 military leader.

10. On 27 July, at the request of President Yoweri Museveni, the Government of Uganda convened a technical meeting bringing together representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry for Disaster Preparedness, Management and Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Uganda. Participants discussed the implementation of a presidential directive, including the consideration of former M23 members for refugee status. They agreed to hold further consultations, notably with UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross, prior to submitting recommendations to the Government of Uganda.

11. The overall security situation in Burundi remained relatively stable, although isolated acts of violence and security incidents were reported in Bujumbura and other parts of the country. These included reports of arbitrary arrest and illegal detention of returnees upon their arrival. Killings, disappearances, abductions, cases of torture and grenade attacks were also reported.

B. Political developments

12. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, against the backdrop of differences between the Government and the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales acquises au changement (Rassemblement) led by Felix Tshisekedi, as detailed in the report on progress in the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 (S/2017/712), on 22 July, Joseph Olenghankoy, leader of a faction of the Rassemblement, was appointed President of the Conseil national de suivi de l'accord et du processus électoral (CNSA). As a result, the faction of Rassemblement led by Felix Tshisekedi called for a two-day "ville morte" general strike on 8 and 9 August 2017. It also continued to demand the departure from office of President Joseph Kabila by December 2017. On 2 August, the Chairman of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI), Corneille Nangaa, indicated that the date of publication of the electoral calendar would be announced in due course following an assessment to be conducted by CENI, CNSA and the transition Government.

13. On 19 and 20 August, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) held its thirty-seventh summit in Pretoria, South Africa. With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, SADC noted several challenges that make the holding of elections by December 2017 unrealistic. SADC also urged CENI to publicize the revised electoral calendar in consultation with the Government and CNSA. Furthermore, the leaders decided to appoint a special envoy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the light of the political and security situation.

14. In Burundi, the overall situation remains volatile with a climate of latent fear and repression. While the security situation has somewhat improved, no significant progress has been achieved in resolving tensions between the Government and opposition groups. On 15 March, President Pierre Nkurunziza signed a decree establishing a 15-member Commission with a mandate to "review, analyse and recommend provisions of the Constitution to be amended". The Constitutional Review Commission has a six-month mandate, renewable once for a further two-month period. This move fuelled concerns over the future of presidential term limits in the country.

15. Meanwhile, the inter-Burundian dialogue, facilitated by former President Benjamin Mkapa of the United Republic of Tanzania, and mediated by President Museveni of Uganda on behalf of the East African Community, remained at a

standstill. From 3 to 5 May, the facilitator sent a team to Bujumbura to consult with select stakeholders. Some participants recommended that the dialogue be relocated to Burundi and called for the return of refugees and exiled political leaders.

16. On 5 May, I appointed former President Michel Kafando of Burkina Faso as the Special Envoy for Burundi. He visited the region, including Burundi, from 27 June to 13 July and again from 21 to 25 August for consultations with Burundians and regional stakeholders.

17. The East African Community remained engaged in the search for a solution to the crisis in Burundi. During its eighteenth ordinary summit, held in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, on 20 May, President Museveni took over the chairmanship of the organization from President John Magufuli of the United Republic of Tanzania. On 11 June, Mr. Mkapa met President Museveni in Kampala to review progress in the inter-Burundian dialogue.

18. On 20 July, President Magufuli and President Nkurunziza met in Ngara, United Republic of Tanzania, to discuss, inter alia, the revitalization of the inter-Burundian dialogue. Prospects for formal direct talks between the Government and the opposition were subsequently boosted by closed-door consultations in Helsinki between Government and opposition representatives in exile from 31 July to 2 August, facilitated by the Crisis Management Initiative. There are indications that the inclusive political dialogue could be restarted within a context of heightened engagements by East African Community leaders. The dire humanitarian situation and continuous deterioration of socioeconomic conditions, which affect neighbouring countries, add a sense of urgency for a solution to the crisis in Burundi.

19. In South Sudan, while fighting between Government and opposition forces continued, some progress was achieved towards the organization of a national dialogue. The National Dialogue Steering Committee and its subcommittees commenced work, including by developing and agreeing on a process and timeline for the dialogue. Key opposition leaders, notably Riek Machar, nevertheless continue to reject the process on the grounds that it is not sufficiently inclusive.

20. In response to the ongoing fighting, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held its thirty-first extraordinary summit on 12 June to discuss the situation in South Sudan. At the summit, IGAD decided, inter alia, to convene a high-level revitalization committee to explore concrete steps towards the full implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

21. President Museveni also hosted meetings between factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), in a bid to reunite South Sudan's ruling party. Riek Machar's faction of SPLM has not participated in these talks.

C. Humanitarian situation

22. With over 7 million internally displaced persons and 3.5 million refugees and asylum seekers, the humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region remains dire. Displacements have increased, owing to insecurity and political conflicts in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, compounded by drought in parts of the region.

23. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, approximately 8.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, representing a 16 per cent increase since January 2017. Some 7.7 million people are severely food-insecure countrywide and 43 per cent of children under 5 are chronically malnourished. The number of

internally displaced persons has reached 3.8 million, making the Democratic Republic of the Congo the country most affected by internal displacement in Africa. In addition to internally displacing 1.4 million people, the insecurity in the Kasai region has caused 33,000 Congolese people to cross the border into northern Angola. Spontaneous returns have been recorded since January 2017, including 271,687 returnees in the Kasai region. There are some 621,700 Congolese refugees in neighbouring countries, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo hosts 541,400 refugees from Burundi, the Central African Republic, Rwanda and South Sudan.

24. In South Sudan, displacement reached unprecedented levels, with over 4 million people uprooted. This number includes over 2 million internally displaced persons, and close to 2 million refugees in neighbouring countries, including in Uganda. Uganda has now become the largest refugee host country in Africa, with approximately 1 million refugees.

25. In the Central African Republic, the humanitarian situation further deteriorated, owing to renewed fighting in several prefectures, bringing the number of internally displaced persons to over 600,000. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, local authorities in Bas-Uélé and North Ubangi provinces have reported approximately 65,000 new arrivals from the Central African Republic between mid-May and the end of August, many of whom were located in areas which were extremely difficult to access during the reporting period.

26. In Burundi, insecurity and political instability have continued to displace populations. Some 198,000 Burundians are currently internally displaced, while approximately 407,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Some 2.6 million people, or 23 per cent of the Burundian population, are food insecure. Furthermore, over 5.3 million cases of malaria and 2,415 deaths have been registered since January 2017.

27. Despite increasing needs, humanitarian budgets remain underfunded across the region. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, a $812.5 million appeal has so far attracted only 27 per cent of funding, the lowest level in 10 years. Likewise, the $64.5 million emergency appeal for the Kasai region has attracted only 37 per cent of the target amount to date.

D. Human rights

28. During the reporting period, grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law were reported in several countries, particularly those affected by protracted conflict and political crises, such as Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.

29. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, human rights violations continued to be reported, including sexual and gender-based violence committed by security forces and armed groups, as well as illegal detentions, forced disappearances and violations of the freedoms of expression, association and assembly. The report on MONUSCO (S/2017/565) provides an extensive account of these human rights violations, most notably in the Kasai region.

30. In response to developments in the Kasai region, on 23 June, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 35/33 on technical assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and accountability concerning the events in the Kasai regions. The Council also proposed the dispatch of international experts to the region. Furthermore, from 13 to 23 June, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) deployed a team of human rights

officers to Angola to interview refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The team gathered accounts of incidents that allegedly took place from 12 March to 19 June.

31. On 15 June, the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 33/24, briefed the Council on the human rights situation in Burundi, noting with concern the scope and gravity of allegations of human rights violations and abuses. The Commission reported continuing violations, namely torture and cruel or inhumane treatment, extrajudicial killings, sexual and gender-based violence, forced disappearances and restrictions on civil liberties. The Commission further deplored the lack of criminal accountability, particularly in the light of the persistence of hate speech by State officials and the ruling party's youth group, the Imbonerakure. On 4 September, the Commission released its final report highlighting the above-mentioned violations and abuses committed in Burundi since April 2015, including on whether they may constitute international crimes. It should be noted that the Government of Burundi, despite being a member of the Human Rights Council, had consistently refused to cooperate with the Commission without formal explanation.

32. Meanwhile, the violence in South Sudan showed little sign of abating. Serious human rights violations against civilians, including killings, abductions, rape and destruction of homes, were reported throughout the country. In a report released on 24 July, Amnesty International provided accounts of thousands of cases of sexual violence allegedly perpetrated by all parties to the conflict.

III. Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

33. As part of the implementation of the national commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the National Oversight Mechanism organized a two-day evaluative workshop on 1 and 2 June. The meeting, supported by MONUSCO, was attended by experts from various ministries, the National Oversight Mechanism, civil society organizations and bilateral and multilateral partners. Targeting the three priorities of peace, elections and social welfare, workshop participants articulated recommendations for accelerating progress in these areas. Recommendations called for, inter alia, the passing of relevant national legislation and the mobilization of adequate resources by national institutions. Detailed information on the implementation of the national commitments is contained in the report on MONUSCO (S/2017/565).

B. Commitments of the region

34. During the reporting period, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and SADC collaborated with the United Nations and the African Union to prevent and manage conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

35. On 15 April, President José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola, as Chair of ICGLR, dispatched his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Kinshasa to encourage President Kabila to continue to reach out to all Congolese stakeholders. Similarly, at the request of President Magufuli, Chair of the SADC Troika of the Organ on Politics, Defence, Security and Cooperation, a ministerial delegation led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania visited

Kinshasa from 19 to 22 April to assess the political and security situation and support the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016.

36. On 24 May, the ICGLR Committee of Ministers of Defence met in Luanda to discuss the security situation in the region. The session was preceded by a meeting of Chiefs of Defence Staff and Defence Forces on 23 May. The Committee directed the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of ICGLR to carry out further verifications in areas where former M23 elements are allegedly located. Other recommendations called for strengthening operations against rebel groups and enhancing efforts to repatriate disarmed foreign combatants to their countries of origin. A follow-up meeting of the ICGLR Chiefs of Defence Staff and Defence Forces and SADC member States took place in Luanda on 8 June.

37. Signatory States of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework also engaged bilaterally on issues of common interest during the reporting period. There were consultations between the Governments of Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the influx of Congolese refugees into Angola, following the outbreak of violence in the Kasai region. The Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan also worked together to address the presence of members of SPLM/A-IO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

38. The reporting period saw efforts by signatory States of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to strengthen economic cooperation. On 30 March, Burundi, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania inaugurated the construction of an 80-megawatt dam project at Rusumo Falls, on the Kagera River, which borders the three countries, a development that holds great promise for regional economic integration and conflict reduction.

C. International commitments

39. During the reporting period, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), initiated a resource mobilization and awareness drive for the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework. Efforts are ongoing to finalize the submission to the Peacebuilding Fund of a $2 million cross-border project between Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania, aimed at preventing conflict and managing population displacement. Furthermore, following the Special Envoy's engagement with senior European Union officials in June, the European Union requested the submission of project proposals for the allocation of €1.5 million for the implementation of the Strategic Framework.

40. On 15 and 16 May, the United States Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region hosted the quarterly meeting of the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region in Washington, D.C. After reviewing the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, participants agreed on the importance of coordinated engagement with Congolese stakeholders in the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016. Contact Group members also highlighted the need to focus international support on preparations for credible elections. Turning to the situation in Burundi, the Contact Group welcomed the appointment of Michel Kafando as Special Envoy for Burundi and underscored the importance of coherent and coordinated regional and international support to the inter-Burundian dialogue facilitated and mediated by the East African Community.

IV. Implementation of the road map of the Special Envoy

41. During the period under review, the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and his Office undertook a series of activities to coordinate and support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. These included steps to strengthen the oversight mechanisms of the Framework, support the neutralization of negative forces, promote peaceful and credible elections and build confidence among leaders in the region.

A. Strengthening the functioning of the oversight mechanisms of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

42. On 4 May, the Special Envoy convened the 17th meeting of the Technical Support Committee of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in Naivasha, Kenya, co-chaired by the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, Ibrahima Fall. Participants received updates and exchanged information on the political, security, social and economic situation, including on women and peace and security and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Participants also considered the updated list of priority activities drawn from the Regional Plan of Action, to be submitted to the next meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, to be held on 19 October in Brazzaville. The Committee further agreed to carry out a field visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in September in order to assess the situation and make recommendations, including on the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of disarmed combatants in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

43. Upon the conclusion of the 17th meeting, the Special Envoy and the Special Representative of the African Union convened a retreat of the Technical Support Committee on 4 and 5 May. Participants made recommendations on strengthening the national structures tasked with implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework; monitoring in-country follow-ups; and increasing visibility and ownership of the Framework.

44. The Technical Support Committee carried out its second field visit to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo from 7 to 10 September. Committee members met local authorities, other stakeholders, including civil society representatives, and MONUSCO officials. They visited transit camps housing former FDLR combatants in Kanyabayonga, North Kivu province; Kalungu, South Kivu province; and Kisangani, Tshopo province. Furthermore, the Committee briefly met a delegation representing SPLM/A-IO members currently cantoned in a MONUSCO transit camp near Goma. The delegation also interacted with local officials and communities in Beni, North Kivu province, with regard to the security threat posed by the Allied Democratic Forces. Representatives of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework participated in the field visit in order to, inter alia, engage the women in the transit camps, as well as those in communities affected by the activities of armed groups.

45. Following the field visit, the Technical Support Committee held its 18th meeting in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 11 September. Drawing on its findings during the field visit, the Committee adopted a set of recommendations to be tabled at the forthcoming meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism. These include a call to: (a) increase military pressure on negative forces in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo by, inter alia, strengthening the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade; (b) take decisive steps to complete the repatriation to Rwanda of disarmed FDLR combatants currently in transit camps in Kanyabayonga,

Kisangani and Walungu; and (c) take similar steps to swiftly repatriate the ex-M23 combatants still in Uganda and Rwanda.

46. On 17 July, the Special Envoy met the African Union Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Minata Samate Cesouma, in Addis Ababa. The Chairperson called on the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to provide unwavering support to the political agreement of 31 December 2016 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With regard to the situation in Burundi, the Chairperson called on regional leaders to strongly support the East African Community-led inter-Burundian dialogue.

47. On 2 August, the Special Envoy met President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo. The two discussed pressing regional issues, including the preparation of the next meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, to be held in Brazzaville on 19 October.

B. Good offices of the Special Envoy

48. During the reporting period, the Special Envoy continued to deliver good offices, in coordination with national, regional and international partners.

Implementation of the Nairobi Declarations

49. The Special Envoy advocated the resumption of consultations between the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the former M23 rebel group. These consultations began in 2016 under the auspices of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. From 20 to 22 March, the Special Envoy visited Kampala for separate consultations with the Ugandan authorities and the political leadership of the former M23. During that meeting, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, Sam Kutesa, encouraged the convening of a special summit of Heads of State of the region on the neutralization of negative forces.

50. During a meeting with the Special Envoy on 21 March, the political leader of the former M23, Bertrand Bisimwa, rejected allegations that the group intended to launch a new rebellion. Encouraged by the Special Envoy, Mr. Bisimwa issued a memo on 22 March, in which he reaffirmed that the former M23 remained committed to the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations.

51. Subsequently, the Special Envoy visited Kinshasa from 27 to 30 March. The Minister for Defence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Crispin Atama, confirmed that elements of the former M23 that had infiltrated the country from Uganda had left Congolese territory. He reaffirmed the readiness of the Government to receive those former M23 members who wished to return peacefully to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

52. In a meeting with the Special Envoy on 28 March, the Coordinator of the National Oversight Mechanism, General Denis Kalume Numbi, reiterated the need for good-faith assurances by former M23 leaders in order to resume joint consultations. He also reiterated the view, communicated in a letter to the Special Envoy and the Special Representative on 14 March, that former M23 elements who had been involved in clashes with FARDC in January 2017 were no longer covered by the amnesty provision contained in the Nairobi Declarations.

53. The Special Envoy returned to Uganda on 13 September. He held consultations with President Museveni and other Ugandan authorities on political and security developments in the region, notably challenges related to the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the repatriation of former M23 elements to the Democratic

Republic of the Congo. The Minister for Defence of Uganda, Adolf Mwesigye, confirmed that, given the lack of progress in the repatriation process, the Government of Uganda had decided to consult with UNHCR with a view to granting refugee status to eligible ex-M23 members present in Uganda. He acknowledged, however, that some legal challenges would need to be addressed in that regard.

Regional consultations on Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition elements present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

54. The Special Envoy, in consultation with the Special Representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, engaged regional and international stakeholders for solutions to the continued presence of SPLM/A-IO elements on MONUSCO premises. In a follow-up to his first visit to Juba on 6 and 7 February, the Special Envoy returned to Juba to meet President Salva Kiir on 4 September. The Special Envoy highlighted the regional implications of the persisting crisis in South Sudan and encouraged continued efforts to forge peace and national unity through the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, as well as an inclusive and transparent national dialogue. Discussing the situation of the members of SPLM/A-IO on MONUSCO premises, President Kiir called for their return under the amnesty he had granted in 2016.

55. Meanwhile, the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, supported by MONUSCO, successfully repatriated eight members of SPLM/A-IO, who had expressed the wish to return to South Sudan. Furthermore, MONUSCO, together with relevant United Nations agencies, explored individual and group solutions for the SPLM/A-IO members present in the camp. As of early August, 58 individuals had been resettled at their request in Ethiopia, Kenya and the Sudan.

Support to dialogue and political processes in the region

56. The Special Envoy continued his good offices and advocacy in support of dialogue processes in the region, in line with Security Council resolution 2348 (2017).

Democratic Republic of the Congo

57. During his visit to Kinshasa from 27 to 30 March, the Special Envoy, together with MONUSCO senior officials, held a series of consultations with Congolese stakeholders to support the finalization of the Arrangements particuliers for the 31 December 2016 political agreement. During these engagements, the Special Envoy stressed the centrality of the 31 December agreement for the holding of peaceful and credible elections, and called for sustained commitment by all parties to achieve agreement on outstanding issues.

58. Noting the importance of concerted regional and international support to the political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Special Envoy visited Brazzaville and Luanda from 26 to 28 April, where he met the President Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo and the Vice-President of Angola, Manuel Vicente, respectively. President Sassou Nguesso encouraged joint engagement by the United Nations and the African Union to ensure the full implementation of the 31 December agreement, and for the conduct of peaceful and credible elections in the country. Vice-President Vicente expressed concern about the security and humanitarian situation in the Kasai region and its impact on Angola. He also affirmed his country's readiness to take part, in its capacity as Chair of ICGLR, in initiatives with other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

59. Subsequently, at the initiative of the Special Envoy, a delegation of senior representatives of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework visited Kinshasa on 29 and 30 May. The team included the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, Georges Chikoti (on behalf of the ICGLR Chair); the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui; the Special Envoy; the Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and representatives of SADC. The purpose of the mission was to encourage Congolese stakeholders to remain engaged in the implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016 and in the preparations for credible and peaceful elections. The delegation also discussed the security situation in the Kasai region and its regional impact.

60. Following the visit by the guarantors, representatives of the presidential majority and the faction of the Rassemblement, led by Felix Tshisekedi, met on 7 June in the presence of the Special Representative to discuss the implementation of the agreement.

61. The Special Envoy subsequently met the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania, Augustine Mahiga, in Dar es Salaam on 14 June. He briefed the Minister on the outcome of the guarantors' visit to Kinshasa and encouraged continuing coordination of messages over the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement.

62. The Special Envoy returned to Kinshasa from 30 August to 2 September, to discuss with the Congolese authorities additional measures that could be taken by the United Nations to support the national investigation into the killing of two members of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Kananga, Kasai province in March of 2017 (see S/2017/713). The mission was in follow-up to a meeting that I held with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 17 August. During the Special Envoy's visit, the Congolese authorities agreed that a United Nations team, led by a senior official, should be embedded within the Congolese investigative team, to help broaden and deepen the investigation.

Support for peaceful elections in Kenya

63. From 12 to 14 June, a Director-level joint Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, UNDP and OHCHR mission was dispatched to Kenya to assess the country's electoral preparedness and to consider actions that the United Nations could take in support of peaceful and credible elections in the country. As a result, it was agreed that a joint task force would be established under the leadership of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, bringing together staff from the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the Office of the Special Envoy, UNDP, OHCHR and the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, together with the Special Envoy and the Resident Coordinator, engaged a wide range of national and international stakeholders with a view to promoting a peaceful electoral process.

64. Following an outbreak of pockets of violence in some parts of the country in reaction to the announcement of the presidential results, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi publicly called for calm and restraint and encouraged the use of legal means envisaged in the Constitution of Kenya to address election-related disputes. She also urged the acting Minister for Interior, Fred Matiang'i, to call for restraint in the response by state security agents to post-election protests.

65. On 1 September 2017, the Supreme Court of Kenya ruled that the presidential election held on 8 August was not conducted in accordance with the Constitution

and applicable laws, thereby rendering the results declared by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission "invalid, null and void". The Commission was directed to organize a fresh election within 60 days, as stipulated in the Constitution. Subsequently, the Commission set 26 October for a fresh presidential election, with only President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga on the ballot.

Natural resources

66. In follow-up to the decision by the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in Luanda on 26 October 2016, the Special Envoy and the ICGLR Executive Secretary, Zachary Muburi-Muita, convened the Regional Experts and Stakeholders Consultation on Natural Resources and Good Governance for Sustainable Peace, Development and Transformation of the Great Lakes region, in Nairobi on 5 and 6 July.

67. For the first time, a wide range of stakeholders, including experts, representatives of governments of the region, the mining industry and trade, civil society, and bilateral and multilateral partners, agreed on recommendations to enhance support to the ICGLR Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and address illicit financial flows to negative forces in the region. Discussions revealed the need for urgent action to tackle the illegal exportation of gold. Participants also discussed measures to curb the activities of criminal networks involved in the illicit exploitation of natural resources.

68. On 4 August, the Special Envoy and the ICGLR Executive Secretary briefed the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the outcome of the experts meeting, including the need for joint action to improve the governance of natural resources in the Great Lakes region.

Promotion of women, youth and civil society

69. During the reporting period, the Special Envoy engaged stakeholders on supporting the participation of women in peace, political and development processes in the region. On 15 June, the Special Envoy chaired the eighth meeting of the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The meeting reviewed recent developments related to the participation of women in peace and dialogue processes. Furthermore, the Office of the Special Envoy continued consultations with signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework on steps to ensure the implementation of the Goma Declaration of the Women's Platform, endorsed by the Regional Oversight Mechanism in Luanda on 26 October 2016.

70. As a follow-up to a special summit of Heads of State on the fight against youth unemployment through infrastructure development and investment promotion, held in 2014 by ICGLR, the Special Envoy and the ICGLR Secretariat jointly facilitated a meeting on youth in Livingstone, Zambia, from 7 to 9 June. The event included a meeting of experts, which gathered 50 youth delegates from ICGLR member States and national and international policy experts, followed by a ministerial meeting on 9 June. Ministers for Youth from the region in attendance agreed on the need for a coordinated and participatory approach to promoting youth employment, and endorsed a 2017-2022 regional strategy for the implementation of the recommendations of the special summit.

Implementation of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017

71. During the reporting period, the Special Envoy, in close coordination with respective United Nations country teams, continued to steward efforts towards the operationalization of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017.

72. On 13 July, the Special Envoy convened the second coordination meeting with Resident Coordinators from the countries covered by the Strategic Framework (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania). The aim of the meeting was to share the political, security and humanitarian developments in the region and discuss implications for United Nations engagement in support of the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. They agreed to continue to enhance cooperation between the Office of the Special Envoy and United Nations country teams.

73. On 14 July, the Special Envoy and the Chair of the Regional United Nations Development Group, Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, convened the first meeting of the Management Board of the Strategic Framework. The Management Board discussed progress made towards its implementation and agreed to accelerate the process, including on resource mobilization.

74. Also on 14 July, the Special Envoy and the Chair of the Regional United Nations Development Group convened the first meeting of the Steering Committee of the Great Lakes cross-border multi-partner trust fund, mandated to provide oversight and ensure accountability of the trust fund. It approved the terms of reference of the trust fund, and discussed planned programmes and projects and a funding mechanism for the secretariat of the Strategic Framework.

75. The Office of the Special Envoy promoted and facilitated with the Regional United Nations Development Group the implementation of the Strategic Framework, including synchronizing the cross-border projects of relevant United Nations funds and agencies ranging from sustainable natural resources management to the rule of law.

Partnerships with regional organizations, governments and other United Nations entities

76. The Office of the Special Envoy achieved progress in enhancing partnerships with regional and international stakeholders to strengthen support for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

77. On 24 March, the Special Envoy met the World Bank Country Director for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo, Ahmadou Moustapha Ndiaye. They agreed to focus cooperation on displacement, youth, gender, natural resources management and the second Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes region. They also agreed to convene a United Nations-World Bank Group regional meeting later in 2017, to enhance cooperation and coordination in these areas in support of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

78. On 8 and 9 May, the Office of the Special Envoy held a third coordination meeting with the ICGLR Secretariat in Bujumbura. Participants reviewed the status of cooperation between the two entities and agreed on steps to ensure implementation of joint activities, including on political engagement, natural resource management, women, youth and judicial cooperation in the Great Lakes region. As a follow-up to this meeting, the Office of the Special Envoy and the ICGLR Secretariat renewed their memorandum of understanding on 20 July 2017 to facilitate cooperation and joint activities in the implementation of their respective mandates.

79. On 27 and 28 June, the Government of Switzerland and the Office of the Special Envoy organized the third retreat for Special Envoys and Experts, in Geneva, in partnership with the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum. The meeting gathered experts, Special Envoys from the Great Lakes region and senior representatives from the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

80. The meeting discussed peace and security developments in the region, with a focus on the prevention of mass atrocities and strengthening the efforts of the international community for conflict prevention and resolution in the Great Lakes region. Following the retreat, the Special Envoy convened a meeting with other Envoys to discuss collaboration and coordination of actions. In particular, they agreed on the need to jointly engage the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on ways to support political processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

81. During the reporting period, the Office of the Special Envoy and MONUSCO deployed liaison officers to Nairobi and Kinshasa, respectively, with the aim to ensure enhanced coordination and synchronization in the implementation of the complementary aspects of the respective mandates of the two missions. Following the decisions of the first retreat between the two missions held earlier this year, the liaison officers coordinated the development of a workplan in support of joint activities and the good offices of the Special Envoy and the Special Representative.

82. As part of efforts to strengthen collaboration with regional organizations and other United Nations entities, the Office of the Special Envoy participated in consultations on peace and security issues in the Central Africa region, organized by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa on 23 and 24 March and on 31 July and 1 August. The meetings provided the opportunity to review peace, security and development challenges at the subregional and country levels and to take stock of ongoing and future initiatives, including in the area of preventive diplomacy in cooperation with subregional organizations including the Economic Community of Central African States and civil society groups.

V. Observations and recommendations

83. Four major challenges to peace and security in the region were prevalent during the reporting period, often resulting in humanitarian crises. These included (a) stalled political processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; (b) the increasing activities of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic; (c) civil conflict in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and attendant humanitarian crises; and (d) tensions around electoral processes in the region. These challenges and attendant regional dynamics negatively affected the resolve of Member States resolve regarding the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and seriously threatened to erode the gains recorded on achieving sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region.

84. Robust and sustained actions are therefore required if the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework is to deliver on its promises. As an immediate step, I encourage the Heads of State and Government of the region to review the implementation of past decisions on the threats posed by armed groups and on the repatriation of former combatants to third countries. The forthcoming meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism will be an opportunity to discuss these and other issues. My Special Envoy and my Special Representative, in close collaboration with ICGLR and SADC, will pursue consultations with stakeholders to ensure that

specific recommendations on these issues are submitted for the consideration of the Heads of State of the region.

85. With regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the repatriation of former M23 elements still present in Uganda and Rwanda, I reiterate my appeal to the Congolese authorities and the leadership of the former M23 to resume joint consultations under the auspices of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The United Nations remains fully committed to this process. I urge all stakeholders to demonstrate continued determination to achieve progress in this regard. While commending the role of the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda in resolving the M23 rebellion, only the effective implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the repatriation of former combatants from these two countries will result in durable solutions.

86. Lasting solutions should also be found for the situation of ex-combatants of the SPLM-A/IO cantoned near Goma. In this regard, I welcome the spirit of collaboration displayed by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, with the support of MONUSCO and the Office of my Special Envoy, on the progress achieved thus far. I call on all regional actors to support these efforts.

87. I welcome the successful organization by the Office of my Special Envoy and ICGLR of the Regional Experts and Stakeholders Consultation on Natural Resources and Good Governance for Sustainable Peace, Development and Transformation of the Great Lakes Region, held in Nairobi on 5 and 6 July. It is encouraging to note the increased cooperation between ICGLR and other partners on strengthening the ICGLR Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources. I also welcome other recommendations from the consultations on addressing illegal exploitation and trade in minerals, including gold, and undercutting financial flows to illegal armed groups.

88. Conflicts in eastern and western Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan have had severe consequences for the most vulnerable populations, generating renewed displacements and placing increasing strain on host countries and communities. I commend, in this regard, the efforts of those countries assisting victims of conflict. During my visit to Uganda on 21 June, for the Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees, I witnessed what can be described as the biggest refugee exodus in Africa since the Rwandan genocide. I reiterate my appeal to the international community and the donor community at large to support humanitarian action in the region, in order to help address the needs of, and find durable solutions for, refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and their host communities.

89. To end the suffering of people, we must first step up our efforts to address the root causes of conflicts in the region through collaborative efforts between countries in the region and the wider international community. I therefore welcome the efforts spearheaded by my Special Envoy and the Regional United Nations Development Group in the context of the Strategic Framework. I take this opportunity to thank countries and multilateral institutions for their generous contributions and pledges to the trust fund of the Framework.

90. As we pursue efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we need to understand the role of women in peacemaking and peacebuilding. Recalling the decision by Heads of States and Government at the meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, held in Luanda on 26 October 2016, to direct their national institutions to follow up on the implementation of the declaration made by the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in Goma in 2014, I encourage my Special Envoy, in conjunction with

ICGLR, to pursue efforts with relevant actors to ensure the effective advancement of the women and peace and security agenda.

91. I reiterate my appeal for the ongoing dialogue and political processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to reach successful conclusions and contribute to lasting stability in the region. I welcome the continued efforts of the East African Community on the dialogue process in Burundi, including the facilitation efforts by former President Mkapa and the renewed engagements of President Magufuli of the United Republic of Tanzania and President Museveni of Uganda. My Special Envoy for Burundi will continue to lead and coordinate United Nations efforts and engage national and regional stakeholders in full support of the East African Community-led inter-Burundi dialogue.

92. I call on all stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to remain committed to the political process and engaged in efforts to ensure the faithful implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement. This will pave the way for peaceful and credible elections, as a basis for lasting peace and stability in the country. My Special Representative, supported by my Special Envoy, will continue his efforts to assist the parties.

93. I also call upon the Commission électorale nationale indépendante to ensure the swift publication of the electoral calendar, and complete voter registration in the Kasai and Kasai Central provinces as well as in the territories of Luilu and Kamiji in Lomami province. I call upon the Parliament to adopt the organic law on the Conseil national de suivi de l'accord et du processus électoral and amendments to the electoral law with urgency and to expedite the adoption of the annex to the amended electoral law on the distribution of seats immediately upon the conclusion of the voter registration process.

94. I encourage the continued engagement by guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework following their successful visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in May 2017. My Special Envoy will continue to promote coordinated regional and international engagement with Congolese stakeholders in support of preparations for peaceful and credible elections in the country.

95. As I indicated in my initial address to the Security Council, trust between governments and citizens is key to promoting peace and stability. While I welcome ongoing efforts towards peaceful and credible elections in most countries, I remain concerned that disagreements over electoral processes in parts of the Great Lakes region have led to political instability and violence, as a result of either continuous delays or disputed outcomes.

96. Elections should be a moment of celebration of democracy and an opportunity for peaceful debate, without violence or instability. In view of recurring electoral challenges in the Great Lakes region, I request my Special Envoy, in cooperation with relevant United Nations entities, to engage stakeholders, including governments, civil society groups and regional organizations, on ways to address the root causes of election-related violence.

97. I thank my Special Envoy and his Office, my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO, and the other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely the African Union, ICGLR and SADC. I call upon the Security Council and the international community at large to remain engaged and support efforts to achieve long-term stability in the Great Lakes region.